English Language Acquisition of the Learners at the Secondary, Higher Secondary and Under Graduate Level in Tribal Communities in Chandrapur District

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INTRODUCTION:

Generally, the term 'language acquisition' is used in the context of learning mother tongue. However, one can apply it to the learning of second or third language. It denotes to the assimilation of proficiency in the language which one learns. This proficiency can be received through the maximum exposure to the target language. Now a day, in almost all the cities in India such exposure is provided to the learners of English language. Moreover, the campuses of some universities, especially Southern, English has become lingua-franca for the students.

Today, in comparison to other Indian and foreign languages, English has got dignified position in India. It is used as the language of administration, of judiciary, of national and international communication, trade and commerce. India is a nation with multi states, multi religions, multi languages; hence English serves as a medium of communication. Besides this, it is the key to knowledge. One can get masterpieces of the world literature in this language. Almost all the scientific inventions are available in English. One can save the herculean task of naming newly to the recently invented scientific terms and concepts. It is also the medium of instruction in many schools and colleges.

English was introduced to the Indians merely as an accident. Lord Machaley introduced it in 1827 to create clerks of Indian blood for the East India Company. He also secretly aimed to convert Indians by comparing Indian rituals and traditions with that of Christian. For this purpose he prescribed Christian religious texts in the school syllabi. The continuous learning of English for about 150 years before Indian Independence, made Indians accustomed to it. The language, Indians received by accident, now helps them to interact not only with the world but also with the people from the various corners of India.

Even after the Independence, taking into consideration the importance of English, Indian government continued the language in Indian curricula. After 1950, many commissions were set. All of them have given weightage to the English. They stated the three language formula, which advices English should be taught as second or third / foreign language at secondary and higher secondary levels.

Historically, English and French are considered to be foreign languages. However, very few people in India use French, but a large number of people use English. It is true that today English has become the second language for Indians.

However, in some of the regions of India, English is treated as the foreign language. People from these regions have weak proficiency in English. There are many reasons for it. Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts of Maharashtra state can be taken as examples. One of the main reasons of weak proficiency in these districts is the inhabitance of tribal communities in this area.

The tribal communities in India are decided by the following Act in the Indian Constitution:

> "Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. This Article says that only those communities who have been declared as such by the President through an initial public notification or through a subsequent amending Act of Parliament will be considered to be Scheduled Tribes.
> The list of Scheduled Tribes is State/UT specific and a community declared as a Scheduled Tribe in a State need not be so in another State/UT. The essential characteristics, first laid down by the Lokur Committee, for a community to be identified as Scheduled Tribes are –
> • Indications of primitive traits;
> • Distinctive culture;
> • Shyness of contact with the community at large;
> • Geographical isolation; and
> •backwardness."
> (http://tribal.nic.in/Content/IntroductionScheduledTribes.aspx)
> The 'tribal communities' in Maharashtra are those 47 communities listed in Indian Constitution under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976. (http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/ST%20Lists.pdf)

As many as 34 tribes have been declared as Scheduled Tribes in the three tahsils of Gadhciroli, Sironca and Rajura. The declared lists are different for Gadhciroli and Sironca on the one hand and Rajura on the other. No tribe is recognised as a Scheduled Tribe in the tahsils of Candrapur, Waroda and Brahmapuri. The 1961 Census enumerated only 13 of the 34 Scheduled Tribes [The remaining 21 Scheduled Tribes for which no one was returned in the notified areas are as under:

Andh, Baiga, Bhaina, Bharia-Bhumia, Bhattra, Bhunjia, Birhul, Dhanwar, Gadaba, Kamar, Kharia, Kondh, Kol, Korwa, Majhwar, Munda, Nihal, Oraon, Parja, Saonta and Sawar.] in the notified areas, such as Bhil, Binjhvar, Gond,

Halba, Kawar, Khairwar, Kolam, Korku, Koya, Nagesia, Pardhan, Pardhi and Thoti. They numbered 1,83,431 or 14.82 per cenr. of the total population.

The Gonds are the most predominant of the Scheduled Tribes from the Point of view of numerical superiority and cultural identity. With a total of 1,66,266 persons, they form about 13.43 of the total population of the district and about 99.74 per cent of the tribal population. Pardhan, with 7,145 persons, is the second largest among the Scheduled Tribes. They are followed by Halba (4.737 persons), Kawar (2,812 persons), and Kolam (1.516 persons).

The tribal population is concentrated to a very great, extent in Sironca tahsil where they comprise about 54.26 per cent, of the total population. The corresponding percentages for Gadhciroli and Rajura tahsils are 35.94 and 27.43, respectively. It is noteworthy that the tribal population in the district increased from 130,694 in 1951 to 183,431 in 1961.

"The Scheduled Tribes arc very much behind in literacy and education compared to the total population. Particularly the females among them have extremely low rates of literacy. The Gond which is the predominant Scheduled Tribe appears to be the most; depressed group in this respect. Other Scheduled Tribes comparatively have slightly higher literacy rates. It is so because the Gond is a group name and includes a large number of Madia or Maria Gonds of Bhamaragad, who still live in the most primitive environment,"

"Nearly 93 per cent of the workers from the Scheduled Tribes work as cultivators and agricultural labourers in the district. The labour participation rate is higher (62 per cent.) among them than that (58 per cent.) for the general population of the district. It is so because the Scheduled Tribes are entirely a rural people and have a much more depressed economy. Many special schemes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes are in progress. The important among them are the two Tribal Development Blocks functioning at Yetapalli and Devvada, each with a combined allocation of Rs. 15 lakhs for stages I and II. Similar Tribal Development Blocks are proposed to be opened at Bedgaon, Dhanora and Karwafa in the district." [District Census Handbook, 1961, Chanda District, Page 21.]

The communities are no longer living their lives as primitives. Certainly, these communities are no longer tribes now. They are getting progressed. The attempts are

made to bring them in the life-stream of common people. The reservation, various grants, privatization of education, and so on has helped these communities to improve their life standards. Particularly, in this 21st century, due mobile revolution and Internet, they are coming in contact with the globalization. However, their ability to acquire English language, in comparison to the Southern states and the Northern states, is low. After one or two decades, the situation can be changed.

Aims and Objectives:

1. The present doctoral research aims at finding the status quo of English language acquisition of learners in the tribal communities in Chandrapur district.
2. This research aims at finding the degree and status of English acquisition at the Secondary School (run by Maharashtra state Government), the Higher Secondary school and the Under Graduate levels in these communities in Chandrapur District.
3. To compare and contrast the degree and status of English language acquisition of these different level learners of the communities in Chandrapur district.
4. To find out the problems of English acquisition in Chandrapur district.
5. To find out possible strategies to remove these problems of tribal communities in the district.

Hypothesis:

Several Research Studies have been undertaken to improve the life standard of the tribal communities: particularly regarding their prosperity, education, health, etc. Such researches were undertaken in Chandrapur District also. However, as far as my knowledge is concerned, nobody has explored the area of their English language acquisition, their status in acquiring that language and the causes, if they fail to acquire it.

While English is the second language in rest of the India, in central India, including Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, it has the position of third language. Perhaps, the extensive use of Hindi, at the secondary and higher secondary school level, as substitute language is the cause of lack of progress of English in Chandrapur

district. The preservation of traditions and rituals in this area could be another reason of keeping people far from English language, English culture and English religion.

Moreover, lack of updated syllabi, teaching aids, training and so on for both the under graduate students and all the school teachers are perhaps reasons of remaining behind in the field of English language acquisition. In addition to that, as far as the government servants are concerned, they hardly use English in their speaking. It is so because the people of the district use Hindi and Marathi for their daily written and spoken communication. Only necessary documents are interacted in English.

The comparison and contrast of all these obstacles will help to sort out remedies. The use of updated syllabi, the appropriate use of ICTs, proper training to teachers, the use of bilingual method and other modern methods for teaching, and the similar things would improve the acquisition of English language in these communities.

Data, Scope, and Limitations:

The scope of this research will include the degree and status of English language acquisition of the learners in the tribal communities in Chandrapur District only. All available printed and electronic material will be selected for the study. The study material will be collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources would be the interaction with the learners from the concerned communities. The limitation will be confined to the learners from the 14 tribes that are found in schools and colleges in Chandrapur district only. The research will also attempt to invent possible remedies for their problems of English language acquisition.

Research Methodology:

The Methodology to be adopted for the research is the survey method (case study). The collected data through this survey will be described, interpreted, analyzed and criticized with the help of various print and electronic secondary sources of the selected topic. The data will be critically analyzed and evaluated in order to find out the problems and the possible remedies of English language acquisition for the learners from the tribal communities in Chandrapur district.

Significance of the Research:

Indian government has implemented many schemes for the development of these tribal communities. The educational development, including English language acquisition, in these communities is also an agenda of this development. The new

university, Gondwana University, is also established for this purpose. So, the research may help to find out the grey area of the acquisition of English among its learners. It would also provide the possible sources and answers to the problems. Therefore, the research would help to heighten the level of English language acquisition.

Tentative Chapter Scheme:

Chapter One: Introduction

It includes etymology, historical development, and a survey of English language in India, of Chandrapur district and the tribal communities in the district.

Chapter Two: English Language Acquisition at the Secondary School Level Learners in the Tribal Communities

In this chapter an attempt will be made to explore the degree and status of English at the secondary school level learners. For this purpose, the data will be collected from the direct interaction with the secondary school students came from tribal communities.

Chapter Three: English Language Acquisition at the Higher Secondary School Level Learners in the Tribal Communities.

The degree and status of English in the higher secondary school level learners will be explored in this third chapter. For this purpose, the data will be collected from the direct interaction with the higher secondary students came from tribal communities.

Chapter Four: English Language Acquisition at the Under Graduate Level Learners in the Tribal Communities

An attempt is made to bring in light the degree and status of English at the under graduate level learners. For this purpose, the data will be collected from the direct interaction with the under graduate students came from the tribal communities.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter is intended to sum up the arguments of the earlier chapters and will ultimately come to a certain conclusion. The conclusion would be in the form of solutions provided to enhance the level of English language acquisition of the learners in the tribal communities in Chandrapur district.

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9